WebBuyer

SITE REVIEWS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING

BY KEVIN SAVETZ

CONTENTS

Tech Shopping 145
Monitors and Accessories 147
Memory 148
Direct PC Vendors 149
Cell Phones and Accessories 150
PC Resources 151
Software Sites 151
Avoiding Online Scams.....152

<Tech Shopping

aberdeeninc.com

Targeting the savvy consumer who craves speeds and feeds, **Aberdeen** offers extensive specs on a wide variety of computers and accessories.

accessmicro.com

Need a gift for that special someone who has everything? Check out **Access Micro,** which stocks tons of items ranging from T1 routers to complete desktop systems. The help desk and hardware guide provide aid to first-time visitors, and the clearance area offers returned items and old inventory for below wholesale cost.

allstarshop.com

The **Allstar Microelectronics** catalog of PC accessories includes graphics cards, motherboards, and peripherals. The selection in some categories is modest, but prices are reasonable, and you'll see an ample amount of information about each product.

blackbox.com

Get connected! Specializing in network products, **Black Box's** extensive 900-page catalog of storage, cabling, and surge-protection products—plus other connectivity accessories—can be viewed online or off.

buy.com

This monstrous, *multifaceted* site sells computers, electronics, books, movies, office products, and more. With a whopping 1 million items, **Buy.com** offers a price-matching policy on most of them.

buycase.com

Banish the boring beige box forever! **Colorcase** offers more than 60 unusual computer cases, including translucent-plastic, aluminum, mirrored, and "character" cases. (You'll want to check out the doggy- and kitty-shaped cases.)

cablestogo.com

Cables To Go sells every conceivable cable you might need for your PC, from standard SCSI to esoteric system-specific cables. You'll also find networking products, bulk cable, tools, and test equipment. You might even get lucky and snatch up what you need at a bargain price in the site's closeout section.

www.cd-recordable.com

The U.S-owned and -based **CD-Recordable Factory Store** actually manufactures the discs it sells. This easy-to-navigate site stocks a massive variety of CD-R discs, including colorless and tinted media, plus disc-packaging and -storage accessories.

cdw.com

CDW offers an enormous array of hardware and software for business. Create side-by-side comparisons in many product categories, and search out dollar-saving deals on the rebates-and-coupons page.

compgeeks.com

Revenge of the nerds, indeed! Shop the **Computer Geeks Discount Outlet** for new, discontinued, and refurbished computer gear. It's a trove for the do-it-yourselfer piecing together a desktop system. The site features low prices and complete specs on every product.

compuplus.com

Comp-U-Plus offers free technical support and a 30-day money-back guarantee on all the peripherals it sells. The catalog isn't exactly earth-shattering in scope, but the prices are reasonable, and plenty of name brands are represented.

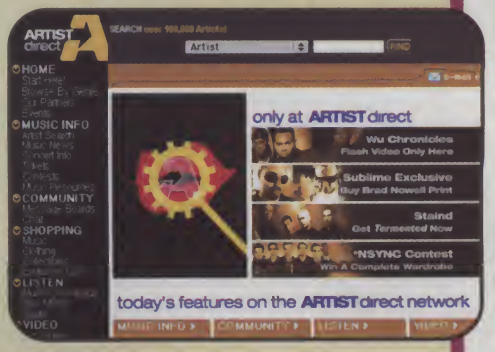
OCTOBER

COMPUTER SHOPPER site OF THE month

artistdirect.com

Lots of online music stores offer mammoth selections and shopper-friendly features such as the ability to preview tracks before you buy. But it takes more than that to move ahead of the pack, and **Artist Direct** muscles forward by offering community forums, loads of artist information, and opportunities to learn about and appreciate musicians even when you're not filling a virtual shopping cart with CDs.

Search for any of the 100,000 artists in the catalog ranging from Blink 182 to Dwight Yoakam, and the site serves up a history of the band or artist, photos, and a discography. For many artists, you can check out tour dates, links to official and fan-created Web sites, and details about bands in similar genres.



The Listen area has oodles of free MP3 and Liquid Audio downloads from selected artists. You'll also find thousands of message boards—from open-ended gab sessions like "Worst Music of the '90s" to discussions devoted solely to little-known niche artists.

Of course, you can also buy albums and videos here. The selection is enormous, including many hard-to-find older albums. And the site also serves up musically inspired clothing and collectibles, along with concert tickets. Whether you're shopping for CDs or just want the latest scoop about your favorite band, Artist Direct will be music to your ears.

SITE REVIEWS

compusa.com

The well-organized **CompUSA** rounds out the usual selection of PC hardware, peripherals, and accessories with areas devoted to electronics and gadgets. The frugal won't want to overlook the site's outlet section.

computergate.com

In business since 1991, **Computer Gate** promises a 30-day satisfaction return policy on its products, which include peripherals and build-to-order PCs. Check out the Quick Index: You'll never have to poke around for the right product again.

computers4sure.com

In the 19 well-stocked departments at **Computers-4Sure.com** you'll find a broad spectrum of products including networking equipment, projectors, PDAs, and scanners. Bargain hunters can quickly sniff out deals on the Clearance pages.

computershopper.com

Computer Shopper's own piece of cyberspace, **computershopper.com,** provides access to product reviews, interactive guides to choosing a desktop or a notebook, and How to Buy sections for the most popular product categories. The site can also help you find an ISP, ASP, or Web host.

www.computersurplusoutlet.com

You're just crazy enough to build your own desktop system, aren't you? Then you'll feel right at home at **Computer Surplus Outlet,** where you'll find closeouts, overstocks, refurbished equipment, and liquidation items. You can even stumble upon the occasional assembly-required Pentium system for less than $100.

cyberwarehouse.com

CyberWarehouse deals in refurbished PCs and notebooks from heavy hitters such as Compaq, HP, and IBM. You'll also find a limited selection of peripherals and software. The site's catalog is small, but the discounts are deep.

dalco.com

Dalco Electronics stocks everything from motherboards to monitors. If you're a bargain hunter, start with the specials found on the home page, which change regularly. You'll also find a helpful motherboard/CPU and memory configurator.

dartek.com

With a roster of more than 100,000 products, **Dartek** peddles an impressive selection of hardware, software, networking equipment, and office furniture. Well-designed features include printable spec sheets, customers' product ratings, a product-watch feature, and a frequent-buyers' club.

directron.com

Specializing in computer peripherals, **Directron.com** offers low prices on a wide variety of name-brand and OEM products. Most items include a 30-day guarantee, and any order earns you the right to pick through the Free Stuff bin. Savvy savers will appreciate the Clearance area, as well as frequent-customer and volume-purchasing discounts.

dirtcheapdrives.com

If you can store data on it, this site sells it. **Dirt Cheap Drives** offers hard drives, CD-ROM and DVD hardware, and drive arrays, with detailed technical information about each product. This decade-old company also stocks mounting kits, media, and accessories.

ebatts.com

Is your notebook or UPS battery running out of juice? **eBatts.com** specializes in batteries for laptops, uninterruptible power supplies, mobile phones, and camcorders. Check out the site's battery tips area for info about battery life, maximizing performance, and recycling old batteries.

ecost.com

The **eCost.com** catalog spans the full range of PC hardware and software, including ready-to-use systems, peripherals, accessories, and applications. The site features fastidious organization and personalized product recommendations.

egghead.com

Egghead.com shoppers can lose themselves in the site's hardware, software, office-product, and electronics superstores. Corporate users will find volume pricing, leasing information, and software licensing in the business center.

elinux.com

At **eLinux** you'll find a whopping 42,000 hardware and software products. The site is so serious about Linux, many of its desktop and notebook systems don't come bundled with that "other" OS. Special offerings include Linux news and a community forum.

emscomputing.com

EMS Computing offers a 40,000-product catalog, an easy-to-navigate site, and low shipping charges. A monthly newsletter delivers informative tips on choosing and using computer accessories.

fwdepot.com

FireWire Depot serves up IEEE 1394 (FireWire) stuff for your compatible computer. The site's selection includes drives, cases, cables, and IEEE 1394 upgrade cards. The buyer's guide provides insightful answers to frequently asked fiery questions.

harddrive.com

Pack rat? **HardDrive.com** has your storage solution. Choosy shoppers will find extensive choices in IDE, SCSI, and IEEE 1394 (FireWire) drives, along with other peripherals. For fashion-forward computer users, the site offers an array of black PC components, from cases to scanners. After all, black *does* go with everything.

hypermicro.com

Hyper Microsystems specializes in storage. The catalog includes CD-ROM and CD-RW drives, tape backup drives, hard drives, and RAID adapters. Check the Hyper Bundles for ready-to-use RAID and CD-RW starter kits.

igo.com

iGo calls itself a "mobile technology outfitter." Use the site to outfit your cell phone, laptop, or PDA with chargers, batteries, and other necessary accessories. The iGo Alerts feature delivers free customized news to your portable device.

insight.com

With more than 110,000 items for sale, **Insight** offers an impressive catalog of hardware and software. Customized sites are available for shoppers in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

jandr.com

Hardware, software, home-office products, and appliances abound at **J&R Computer World,** the New York City-based superstore famed for its selection and, ahem, "brusque" service. Avoid the attitude with this online version, which specializes in cameras, both digital and traditional film models. Product help is available via e-mail, online chat, and phone.

lanblvd.com

Wrestling with your old router? Network card not working? **LanBlvd.com** specializes in networking products. You'll find hubs, routers, interface cards, and wireless stations, along with other essentials for your LAN.

SITE REVIEWS

laptoptravel.com

Laptop Travel is road-warrior heaven! The site sells portable-computing and international-travel gear, including electrical adapters, modem converters/couplers, and security accessories. You'll find traditional and "camouflaged" laptop carrying cases, laptop RAM, and storage add-ons.

linuxcentral.com

Find your alternative at **Linux Central.** The site stocks Linux-friendly hardware, commercial software, and operating-system CD-ROMs. A selection of Linux-compatible T-shirts, hats, and ties will help you flash your alternative tendencies in public.

mcglen.com

McGlen Micro's specialized searches can help you find memory and other accessories compatible with your computer, printer, or copier. With the Build-To-Order Configurator, shoppers can design a custom system, which the company will configure and ship to you in two days.

megahaus.com

MegaHaus bills itself the "drive authority," offering a wide variety of storage solutions, including hard drives, DVD drives, RAID arrays, and CD-mastering products.

mei-microcenter.com

MEI-Micro Center offers new and refurbished desktops from Compaq, eMachines, Hewlett-Packard, and PowerSpec. You'll also find a decent selection of peripherals. Rummage through the bargain bin for deals on closeouts, refurbished units, and overstocks.

microx-press.com

MicroX-Press offers hardware, software, prebuilt systems, and clearance items, with detailed specs on each. Read the return policy before you order, lest you be stuck with a 15 percent restocking fee.

www.mobile-mania.com

Quickly head to **Mobilemania.com** for digital cameras, e-mail devices, PDAs, cases, and adapters. You'll find the bountiful selection a haven for folks (like you) who are always on the go.

mobileplanet.com

MobilePlanet is home to a gaggle of high-tech tools and toys for mobile professionals. The selection includes handheld and notebook computers, PDAs, wireless-communication products, and travel-size printers and scanners.

mobilizenow.com

On the go? Gear up at **MobilizeNow,** where you'll find the gadgets you need, including GPS receivers, portable radios, and cellular and PDA accessories. Tell the site what country you're headed for, and it will spit out a list of appropriate adapter plugs, phone adapters, and voltage converters.

motherboardexpress.com

Oh, Mama. **Motherboard Express** was made for PC-building connoisseurs. Shoppers can filter the selection of 100-plus boards by manufacturer, chipset, processor type, case type, onboard controller, or number of CPUs.

motherboards.com

With a wide selection of motherboards from nine manufacturers, do-it-yourselfers will revel in handpicking the perfect innards for their new PCs at **Motherboards.com.** Order a motherboard and CPU together, and the company will configure and test them for you.

www.mwave.com

In addition to PC systems and peripherals, **Multiwave Direct** stocks notebook accessories, videoconferencing equipment, and network tools. Top sellers, "blowout specials," and rebate forms are a click away from the home page.

neutronet.com

Neutron carries thousands of computer systems and peripherals from nearly 400 manufacturers and distributors. A handy toolbox offers easy access to best buys, help for first-time buyers, and a massive manufacturer directory.

Monitors and Accessories

glareshield.com

GlareShield.com sells monitor filters, including antiglare filters, screen magnifiers, and radiation blockers. If you use a laptop in an airplane or other public place, a privacy filter will keep wandering eyes off your screen. Specialty filters are available for notebook, LCD, and iMac screens.

monitorexpress.com

Monitor Express sells 500 models of new monitors, plus money-saving refurbished ones. The catalog also includes monitor cables, adapters, power cords, and screen filters. The company has a recycling program that may give you cash for an old display, whether it's in working condition or not.

monitoronsale.com

Monitor Onsale serves up new and refurbished displays from name-brand manufacturers. Refurbished monitors have a 30-day warranty. Two extended warranty plans are available for an additional fee.

monitoroutlet.com

From inexpensive 14-inchers to elegant (and pricey) flat-panel LCDs, **Monitor Outlet** serves up a wide array of displays. The site sells units from 24 manufacturers, with quick-comparison pages to help you choose. The catalog also includes specialty monitors such as touch screens, wide-aspect-ratio displays, and projectors.

monitorsdirect.com

Monitors Direct specializes in Cornerstone and Hitachi monitors, sold factory-direct. Extensive specifications, data sheets, and comparison tools will help you find the perfect display. Three- and five-year extended warranties are available.

monitorworld.com

MonitorWorld.Com is a monitor-information database. The site provides specs on more than 2,000 displays from countless manufacturers. You'll also come across plenty of information about common monitor cables, adapters, and switchboxes.

repairfaq.org

The **Sci.Electronics.Repair FAQ** is an enormous site that includes a section devoted to computer monitors. There you'll find answers to hundreds of questions, from tips on monitor placement and preventative maintenance to solutions to tricky technical problems.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BILL RIESER

SITE REVIEWS

newegg.com

You won't have to shell out big bucks or scramble for hardware at **NewEgg.com**. Peck at the site's listings of new products and top sellers, then take a crack at the specials. Order carefully—the 15 percent restocking fee might make you squawk.

www.notebooksuperstore.com

Devoted exclusively to portable computers, **NotebookSuperStore.com** sells more than 100 different laptop models from nine manufacturers. You'll see technical details about each model, and a comparison tool helps you zero in on the best portable for you.

nxgen.com

Next Generation's Web site is densely packed with prebuilt computers and peripherals ranging from cables to graphics cards. The selection is huge, and the site provides full specs and plenty of details about each product.

1coolpc.com

A cool computer is a happy computer. **1CoolPC** specializes in fans, heat sinks, and other cooling devices for your CPU, graphics card, monitor, hard drive, and other components that tend to swelter.

outpost.com

Outpost.com sells 170,000 products—a full range of computer hardware, plus cameras, electronics, and innovative specialty products from partner companies.

Memory

crucial.com

One of the largest providers of memory upgrades on the Web, **Crucial Technology** offers free shipping on RAM for 11,000 computer systems. The site's Memory Selector helps buyers find the right product, and the company backs its memory with a lifetime warranty.

1stchoicememory.com

For most types of RAM, **1st Choice Memory** provides a choice of two or three grades—from inexpensive generic memory to premium-quality modules. Premium modules often feature low-noise emissions, extensive testing, and a system-compatibility guarantee.

memman.com

All of the desktop and laptop memory sold at **Memory Man** carries a lifetime warranty, and the site's reference guide has RAM-configuration info for all brand-name computers. The site also sells processors, motherboards, hard drives, and more for do-it-yourself system builders.

memory4less.com

Memory4Less.com offers low prices on a wide variety of RAM, including older types you may have been pulling your hair out trying to find. If you don't know the memory requirements of your computer or digital camera, the site will clue you in.

mushkin.com

Mushkin Enhanced Memory Systems stocks a wide range of RAM modules, from double-data-rate SDRAM to specialty memory products. If you're working on a big upgrade project, check out the site's Fat Paks—bundles of 10, 25, or 50 memory modules at significant discounts.

polarismemory.com

In addition to memory for desktops, laptops, and workstations, **Polaris Memory** sells RAM for printers, copiers, and fax machines. Digital-camera users will find four types of memory to choose from.

rammatters.com

This humorous and informative site extols the virtues of having enough RAM in your computer. **RAMmatters.com** was created by the Council on Computing Power, an industry group that is to RAM what the Milk Board is to dairy products.

palmgear.com

Users of handhelds will appreciate the extensive selection of free and commercial programs downloadable from **PalmGear HQ.** Shoppers can buy PDA hardware and accessories, including carrying cases and hip styli. Sign up for an e-mailing list to receive information about new software, news, and user tips.

pcconnection.com

PC Connection offers nifty bargains on a colossal variety of PC and Macintosh products. Smart Selectors ease the searching process for those looking for turnkey systems, cameras, printers, monitors, or memory to fit specific guidelines.

www.pcliquidator.com

The getting's good at **PC Liquidator,** a site that offers clearance, refurbished, and overstocked hardware and software. The inventory is always changing and usually inexpensive. You can find many hardware choices for under $10—some for less than $5.

pcmall.com

Shoppers at **PC Mall** receive free lifetime technical support on the site's vast selection of computers, hardware, and software. The site's business-solutions forum offers corporate leasing and volume pricing. Apple-heads can find all their favorite Macintosh products at the **Mac Mall** sister site ***(www.macmall.com)***.

pczone.com

PC Zone stocks an impressive selection of all things PC. You'll find links to a clearance area and other stores: **Mac Zone** and **Electronics Zone.** Printable rebate coupons can save you some cash.

powersupersite.com

Searching for that perfect uninterruptible power supply? **Power SuperSite** probably has it. Moreover, it has the answers to help you make the right choice. The site sells new, used, and refurbished UPSs, as well as surge protectors and replacement batteries for UPSs.

provantage.com

Provantage offers PC products from more than 1,000 manufacturers, including a large selection of books and training materials. The site's Personal Tracking List feature lets customers build a list of product bookmarks, then monitor prices and availability.

7-24.com

Deal-crazy shoppers will feel at home at the **7-24 Outlet Store,** which sells computer hardware and electronics closeouts. This site is a source for hard-to-find media and accessories for SyQuest, Avatar, and Iomega Ditto drives. The electronics area offers telephones, walkie-talkies, and other gadgets.

www.sg3d.com

Sunway Graphics specializes in PC graphics cards, offering a wide selection of powerful 3D accelerators. You'll also see a smaller selection of other

graphics products: TV-tuner cards, videoconferencing equipment, and video-capture cards.

shopper.cnet.com

The **CNET Shopper** search engine takes the guesswork out of finding a deal on hardware, software, and accessories. The price-drop-alerts feature will send you e-mail when the cost of a coveted gadget falls. (CNET Networks is *Computer Shopper's* parent company.)

sparco.com

Looking for that something extra? Check out **Sparco.com's** list of products that come bundled with "free stuff." The site stocks more than 130,000 products, and it offers a list of discounted items for students and faculty members of academic institutions.

ssdonline.com

At **State Street Direct,** shoppers will discover a huge selection of computers and imaging products. Digital-camera shoppers will find many items of interest, including customized comparison charts.

staples.com

Yeah, they've got that. **Staples'** Web site offers a liberal price-matching policy on computer accessories, software, and office supplies. If you order similar items often, you can set up personalized shopping lists. The company can occasionally take its time shipping items out to you, though, so beware.

superwarehouse.com

SuperWarehouse.com stocks printers, monitors, hard drives, scanners, and laptops. The site's selection of printers is particularly large, and even includes plotters, dot matrix, and other special-use printers.

tccomputers.com

In business since 1988, **TC Computers** sells fully configured systems, motherboards, and peripherals. The company's specialty is motherboards; buyers can choose to have motherboards and processors preassembled and tested for no extra charge.

tcwo.com

Thompson's Computer Warehouse Outlet offers only a small selection of computer products. You may find only a dozen monitors or four CD-ROM drives, but the prices are fantastic.

SITE REVIEWS

techstore.com

TechStore.com offers hardware in dozens of categories and highlights monthly top sellers. The site also sells software, ranging from productivity suites to children's titles.

thenerds.net

With no misgivings about the tech-savvy of its company or customers, **TheNerds.net** offers 60,000 computer products, ranging from cables and connectors to graphics cards, at its fast and friendly site. The liberal 30-day return policy will protect you from getting stuck with the wrong product.

tigerdirect.com

TigerDirect's site offers 50,000 products, including custom-built computers that are tested and shipped within 48 hours. Up for a little adventure? Order a build-it-yourself custom PC kit, and let the fun begin!

truedataonline.com

True Data Technology stocks an exceptional catalog of motherboards, hard drives, and other upgrades. The site also features communication essentials for businesses, including DSL equipment and telephony products.

usbstuff.com

USB Stuff deals in Universal Serial Bus-equipped gadgets, including digital cameras, CD-RW drives, printers, modems, hubs, and input devices. But its poor site design makes navigation difficult. Sister site ***www.firewirestuff.com*** stocks IEEE 1394-compatible hardware.

warehouse.com

The four "warehouses" under **MicroWarehouse's** roof sell PC hardware, Mac products, datacomm components, and supplies. The site accepts corporate, educational, and government accounts, and offers business leases on many products.

Direct PC Vendors

www.alienware.com

Alienware can build you a gamer's dream machine, high-performance workstation, or desktop video system. Cases are available in a rainbow of out-of-this-world colors.

buyabs.com

Exceptional customer support on custom-configured desktop and notebook systems is the goal at **ABS Computer Technologies.** All systems include a 30-day money-back guarantee. Some computers are available with Linux preinstalled.

buy-atlas.com

Atlas Micro offers desktop PCs built around Pentium, Celeron, and AMD processors. Buyers can use drop-down menus to create a custom configuration and are protected by a reasonable 30-day return policy.

compaq.com

Three arms of **Compaq Computer's** site offer computers for everyone. See the Compaq AtHome division ***(athome.compaq.com)*** for home and home-office systems, DirectPlus ***(www.directplus.compaq.com)*** for business PCs and servers, or the Compaq Factory Outlet Superstore ***(compaqfactoryoutlet.com)*** for big bargains.

csd.toshiba.com

The Web home for **Toshiba's** stylish portables and desktop systems doesn't offer as many build-to-order options as some other sites, but it's loaded with plenty of extended-warranty and lease options.

cyberpowerinc.com

Each **CyberPower** PC includes a three-year warranty and 30-day money-back guarantee. The site's service area includes downloadable drivers and lifetime tech support.

dell.com

Dell Computer's electronic storefront has always led the way in ease of use. The site is jam-packed with detailed information that makes it a snap to match a machine to your needs. Each system is configurable to the nth degree via drop-down menus, and you can get quick access to online support customized for your PC.

www.fujitsu-pc.com

Fujitsu's site focuses on portable computing, including notebook PCs and pen-based tablet computers. Each computer includes several warranty options. A trade-in program offers cash back on your old computer when you upgrade to certain models.

gateway.com

One of the biggest players in online computer sales, **Gateway** has an enormous and informative site that sells custom-built desktops and portables, delivering them on time 98 percent of the time, according to BizRate.com.

hpshopping.com

At this site, **Hewlett-Packard** sells its lines of desktop and notebook computers, handhelds, PDAs, digital cameras, scanners, and printers. The site makes repeat purchases simple for businesses and individuals.

ibm.com/products

ShopIBM sells business and home PCs, notebooks, servers, thin clients, networking equipment, and peripherals. The build-to-order option allows buyers to customize a new desktop. Linux is an option on laptop models.

idot.com

From low-cost budget models to powerful monster machines, **iDot** offers customized desktop and notebook computers with a good return policy.

SITE REVIEWS

microexpress.net

Micro Express offers built-to-order desktop and notebook computers featuring AMD and Intel processors. Each system includes a 30-day guarantee and a two- or four-year warranty. Business leases are available.

micronpc.com

One of the largest direct PC vendors, **MicronPC** sells computers to home-office users, larger businesses, government buyers, and buyers outside the United States. The Factory Outlet offers refurbished and discontinued systems.

www.mwmicro.com

Go MidWest, young man. **MidWest Micro** delivers down-home, custom-configured desktops, servers, and notebook systems. The site's Service Center is exemplary, with a troubleshooting knowledge base and driver downloads that cater to your particular system.

nutrend.com

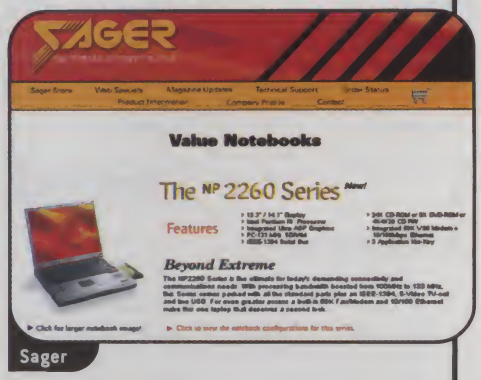
Custom-configure a home or business desktop PC at **NuTrend Computer Products.** The company stocks machines running your choice of Intel or AMD processors. Each system comes with a three-year warranty.

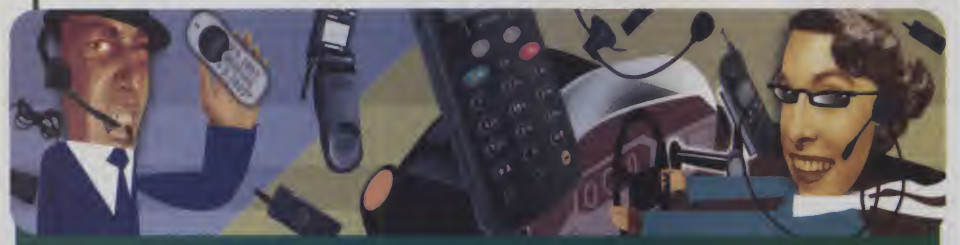
www.polywell.com/onlinestore

Polywell Computers may not be a household name, but the company offers desktops, workstations, and servers that are worth a look. You'll find massive custom-configuration options.

www.sagernotebook.com

Specializing in notebook computers, **Sager** offers a variety of options, from budget machines to speedy multimedia units. Service includes a 72-hour repair-turnaround guarantee and lifetime free tech support. Business leases are available.





Cell Phones and Accessories

bigskybattery.com

Juice up your phone at **Big Sky Battery,** where you'll find scores of cell-phone batteries including lithium, nickel metal-hydride, and good old nickel-cadmium. You'll find many choices for popular phones, with long-life, colored, and vibrating batteries in stock. The selection also includes cases and chargers.

cellularaccessory.com

Shopping at **CellularAccessory.com** is almost as fun as chatting the hours away on your mobile phone. The large selection ranges from useful items (holsters and rapid chargers) to quirky gadgets for personalizing your phone (such as funky faceplates and flashing antennae).

cellulardeals.com

Simply Cellular deals in mobile-phone accessories, including cases, chargers, and cellular modems. Tell the site what model of cell phone you own, and the site will generate a list of compatible accessories.

cellularmarket.com

CellularMarket.com is a no-nonsense site for mobile-phone accessories. The selection includes hands-free kits, batteries, and antennae. The site will show you the products that work with your phone, and lets shoppers limit their browsing to OEM or aftermarket accessories.

flashingantennas.com

This little site specializes in flashing antennae for mobile phones—just what every teenager and mobile trendsetter needs. **FlashingAntennas.com** stocks a bewildering number of flashy antennae—and if that isn't enough, flashing batteries. The selection is small but focused.

letstalk.com

LetsTalk.com sells cell phones, accessories, and service. Several phones are available for free when you sign up for cellular service, but the site doesn't offer mobile-phone service in all areas. The free WirelessInbox tool lets you access e-mail from any Web-enabled phone.

plugout.com

Plug in to **Plugout.com,** which stocks more than 1,500 mobile-phone accessories. The company guarantees its batteries for two years; all other items have a lifetime replacement warranty.

shopprostar.com

Each computer in **ProStar Computer's** line of notebook PCs is backed by a 30-day money-back guarantee, a speedy-repair promise, and free tech support. The handy comparison tool helps buyers zero in on the best model.

sonystyle.com

SonyStyle sells Sony's line of VAIO desktops and notebooks, plus digital cameras, displays, and storage devices. The Xtras Direct section of the site carries add-ons for PCs, digital cameras, and other equipment.

store.apple.com

Apple Computer's well-designed site allows you to custom-configure any Macintosh computer and offers a wide array of Mac-compatible software and accessories. Beware the one-click ordering feature, however—using it may be a bit too convenient for impulse buyers!

www.tiny.com/us

Britain's favorite direct computer seller is now targeting us Yanks. **Tiny Computers'** line of prebuilt desktop and notebook PCs includes models for professionals and first-time buyers.

unitedmicro.com

Take home a preconfigured Intel- or AMD-based PC, or start with a bare-bones system and let **United Micro** install the components of your choice.

www.winbook.com

Focusing exclusively on portables, **WinBook Computer** offers machines with a 30-day money-back guarantee, a one-year warranty, and free technical support. Ironically, some of the site's best deals, the daily "Web specials," can only be ordered by phone.

SITE REVIEWS

PC Resources

consumerreview.com

ConsumerReview.com helps consumers research products before they buy. The site provides more than 200,000 reviews and ratings for tech gadgets and products for the home, car, and kids.

dcresource.com

The **Digital Camera Resource Page** is an unbiased, comprehensive source of information for digital-camera buyers and owners. Shoppers can glean necessary info from the FAQ page, buyer's guide, message boards, and reviews.

dealnews.com

Deal yourself in! **Dealnews** is a fantastic buyer's guide that reports on low-price specials in Web stores. Updated daily, the site discovers deals that range from tempting to nearly impossible to resist. Check out sister site **Dealmac** for Mac-oriented gotta-haves.

dealtime.com

DealTime.com is an independent comparison-shopping service. The site aggregates prices from hundreds of online merchants, auctions, and classified sites. Also, 21st-century shoppers can compare prices by cell phone or wireless PDA, thanks to the site's mobile service.

expertcity.com

Expertcity.com promises live, 24-hour computer assistance from real human beings. When you pose a question, experts across the Internet bid for your business. Read their profiles, compare prices, then choose the expert you like.

56k.com

See **56K.com** for a primer on 56kbps modems, a price shopper for buying a modem at the best price, and *downloads of the latest firmware*. Read the special report on the new V.92 modems.

gomez.com

Gómez.com offers ratings and customer reviews of e-commerce sites in two dozen categories, ranging from Web-based computer stores to drugstores, apparel vendors to online brokers. Check the ratings on ease of use, customer confidence, and cost.

hardwarereincarnation.com

Let your laptop live again! **Hardware Reincarnation** is a guide to repairing and upgrading laptop computers. The site includes a database of LCD screens—find out which laptops' displays are compatible. You'll also find upgrade tips and a guide to laptop repair.

www.linhardware.com

Will that sleek new laptop run Linux? Find out with the **ZDNet Linux Hardware Database,** where users share their experiences regarding which hardware's compatible with Linux—and which isn't. For the stuff that is, download the appropriate driver and put it to work. (ZDNet is owned by CNET Networks, *Computer Shopper's* parent company.)

motherboards.org

Motherboard HomeWorld is packed with motherboard news, reviews, specifications, and tips. Its comprehensive database of 1,400 products includes driver information, technical details, and overclocking hints.

nextag.com

NexTag is a sophisticated buying service that can help frugal shoppers find the lowest possible prices on computer equipment, electronics, books, music, and videos. Entering your ZIP code allows NexTag to calculate shipping and tax for accurate pricing.

pdastreet.com

No matter which PDA you use, there's something for you at **PDAStreet.com.** This multifaceted site delivers reviews, software downloads, user tips, and classified ads for Windows CE, Palm, Visor, Psion, and RIM users.

resellerratings.com

Want a second opinion before you share your credit-card number with an unfamiliar online merchant? Check **ResellerRatings.com,** which provides customer evaluations of 1,900 online hardware vendors. Take reviews with a grain of salt: We've seen dozens of negative messages posted by one (very unhappy) person.

windrivers.com

WinDrivers.com is a comprehensive archive of drivers and DLL files for hard drives, sound cards, scanners, and other hardware. The site also provides links to antivirus updates and BIOS upgrades.

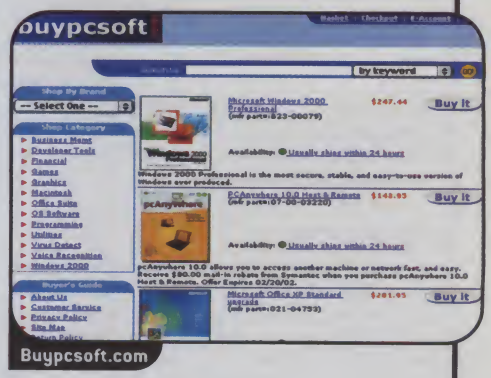
Software Sites

arcamax.com

Among other items, **ArcaMax** carries a selection of Windows and Mac software, most priced at $7.95—and all with free shipping. Choose from business software, clip art, games, and reference titles, with lots of options for kids and adults.

beyond.com

Beyond.com presents software for PC, Mac, and PDA users. In addition to traditional boxed titles, the site sells downloadable software from major publishers and a respectable selection of computer hardware. (CNET Networks, *Computer Shopper's* parent company, is an investor in Beyond.com.)



buypcsoft.com

Buypcsoft.com offers software for Windows PCs in categories from business management to voice recognition. It's an efficient site with a good selection and high ratings among previous and current customers.

chumbo.com

In addition to tons of Windows programs and DVD movies, **Chumbo.com** features PDA software and a Linux Store that sells applications for the popular alternative OS.

compuexpert.com

If you crave games for your Mac or PC, stop by **Compuexpert.com.** The well-stocked categories include racing simulations, sports games, strategy games, and adventure titles. Colorful descriptions and multiple screenshots are given for most titles.

cws.internet.com

Stroud's Consummate Winsock Applications List is the ultimate one-stop download site for Internet software, including Web-development tools, browsers, and chat clients. You'll find comprehensive file lists, ratings, and extensive reviews. A free newsletter provides summaries of new software releases.

download.cnet.com

CNET Download.com will help you find shareware and free software, linking to thousands of PC, Mac, Linux, and PDA titles. Well-written newsletters and down-to-earth reviews help you to locate the perfect program. (CNET Networks is *Computer Shopper's* parent company.)

SITE REVIEWS

dragon.ca

When we think of Canada, three things come to mind: Mounties, ice hockey, and **The Dragon's Den.** This popular site sells video games for the PC, PlayStation, and other consoles. They're quite used to selling to their southern neighbors—prices are available in U.S. dollars, and shipping is very affordable.

ebgames.com

The online arm of the ubiquitous Electronics Boutique stores, **EBGames.com** is a video-game player's paradise, offering over 3,000 products. Its home page highlights new releases, coming-soon titles, and top sellers. Bargain hunters will love the long list of preowned titles available at significant discounts.

freewarefiles.com

Windows users who want software without having to spend any money can start at **Freeware Files.com.** This site features quick links to the most popular giveaways.

handango.com

Handango offers thousands of commercial software downloads for Palm OS, Pocket PC, Windows CE, and RIM handhelds. Newbies can start with the site's tutorials and recommendations for first-time buyers.

jumbo.com

Jumbo is the perfect name for this monstrous file archive, featuring programs for sale, demos, shareware, and freeware. Jumbo Guides offer articles on backing up, sharing MP3s, and other computing topics.

linux2order.com

Linux2order offers more than 10,000 Linux and open-source applications available on $5 custom-burned CDs, as free standard downloads, or as high-speed downloads for a subscription fee.

Avoiding Online Scams

bbb.org

The **Better Business Bureau** provides a litany of ways to avoid becoming the victim of a shady business or online scam. Use the site to check out a company's reputation before doing business with it, or investigate a charity before forking over a donation. If you are the victim of a scam, file an online complaint against the business.

fraud-report.org

Fraud-Report.Org is a nonprofit organization that fights online and telemarketing fraud. Scam alerts, which you can read at the site or receive via e-mail, offer information about new swindles that are making the rounds. The Prevention Tips page contains useful information to arm yourself against the bad guys.

www.ftc.gov

The **Federal Trade Commission's** Web site is packed with useful information about consumer fraud and how to avoid it—online and off. If you've had a problem with a merchant, you can file a complaint with the FTC Bureau of Consumer Protection online.

www.ifccfbi.gov

The **Internet Fraud Complaint Center** is a partnership between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National White Collar Crime Center. The site offers victims of online fraud a simple reporting tool that alerts authorities of a suspected online fraud.

korova.com

The "Hoax du Jour" at **Korova Multimedia's** site isn't really updated every day, but it does provide a fairly up-to-date log of current e-mail chain letters, scams, and other hoaxes as they crop up on the Internet.

safeshopping.org

A service of the American Bar Association, **SafeShopping.org** gives solid and reasonable advice for online shoppers. Content is broken into 10 short pages of tips on payment, security, delivery, and other topics. The site can provide insight for online-shopping newbies, but e-commerce pros are bound to learn something, too.

999central.com

The price is right at **999central.com,** which stocks 100 software and DVD titles, each for $5—shipping included. Educational, entertainment, and lifestyle applications are the most common.

softwareoutlet.com

Calling all cheapskates! Come check it out. **SoftwareOutlet.com's** a veritable virtual bargain bin. You'll find dirt-cheap apps—older versions, titles from defunct companies, or just plain funky stuff.

www.tucows.com

It's not just bovine bliss: **Tucows** is also an incredible archive of freeware and shareware. Plenty of local mirror sites keep the download process speedy. The category list and reviews make finding the software you seek a breeze.

wiredlounge.com

Here's a site hard-core gamers will want to plug in to. **Wired Lounge** serves up recently released games for PCs and consoles. The site is packed with refreshingly honest reviews, coupled with plenty of screenshots to whet your appetite.

zdnet.com/downloads

You'll need more bandwidth. Download shareware, freeware, and demos from **ZDNet Downloads.** The site offers daily software highlights and quick links to the week's most popular software. Every program is rated, reviewed, and checked for viruses, so your new software won't come with any unpleasant surprises. (ZDNet is owned by CNET Networks, *Computer Shopper's* parent company.) ▼